

School Lunches

School lunch (*Kyu-shoku* in Japanese) is part of the national standard in Japan. Providing and creating awareness of eating a healthy, balanced meal for all students and teachers is seen as a responsibility for all schools. The whole school, including teachers and the principal, eat the same lunch each day, menus carefully created by a school nutritionist.

School lunch is not only about nutrition, but also is part of a student's moral education. Serving lunch is the students' job, and they learn about working together and taking responsibility. When lunch is served, students and a teacher say "*Itadakimasu* – thank you for this meal!" together and eat together in their classroom. Often times, older students are responsible for not only serving their own lunch but also helping out younger students for their lunch preparation until they get used to the processes. Also, school lunch is used as a tool for teaching table manners.

Japanese kids enjoy various snacks, but they are usually not allowed to bring any snacks or drinks to school. Therefore, eating breakfast is important. Otherwise, they get very hungry before their school lunch hour arrives.

More useful information taken from:

http://www.tjf.or.jp/shogakusei/exp/exp01_e.

- Part of the cost is borne by the students' parents. Though prices depend on the community, the fee is about 4,000 yen (approximately \$40.00) per month.
- In 2004, school meals were provided in 99.4% of elementary schools, 82.4% of junior high schools and 70.2% of part-time night schools.
- *Kyuushoku* (School lunches) is prepared in the school kitchen. School lunches prepared at a local school-lunch center are delivered to elementary and junior high schools without school-lunch kitchens of their own.
- School lunches were introduced in the period after the end of World War II when many people suffered from lack of nutrition.

